# AT Util

## AT Util Dump

1. Each type of pleasure—the pleasure of sleeping, the pleasure of eating—is qualitatively different, so we can’t quantify and compare pleasures under consequentialism.
2. Aggregation is nonsensical—assessments of moral harms must reference individuals, not collectives.

#### Kymlicka[[1]](#footnote-1)

For it is entirely unclear why maximizing utility, as our direct goal, should be considered a moral duty. Whom is it a duty to? Morality, in our everyday view at least, is a matter of interpersonal obligations—the obligations we owe each other. But to whom do we owe the duty of maximizing utility? Surely not the impersonal ideal spectator who often figures into such theory, for he does not exist. Nor to the maximally valuable state of affairs itself, for states of affairs do not have moral claims.

1. An infinite world mathematically contains an infinite amount of pleasure and pain, so consequentialism fails to prescribe action.

#### Bostrom[[2]](#footnote-2)

The infinite case is fundamentally different. Suppose the world contains an infinite number of people and a corresponding infinity of joys and sorrows, preference satisfactions and frustrations, instances of virtue and depravation, and other such local phenomena at least some of which have positive or negative value. More precisely, suppose that there is some finite value ε such that there exists an infinite number of local phenomena (this could be a subset of e.g. persons, experiences, characters, virtuous acts, lives, relationships, civilizations, or ecosystems) each of which has a value ≥ ε and also an infinite number of local phenomena each of which has a value ≤ (‒ ε). Call such a world canonically infinite. Ethical theories that hold that value is aggregative imply that **a[n]** canonically **infinite world contains** an **[both] infinite** quantity of **positive** value **and** an infinite quantity of **negative value.** This gives rise to a peculiar predicament. **We can do only a finite amount of good or bad. Yet** in cardinal arithmetic, **adding or subtracting a finite quantity does not change an infinite quantity. Every** possible **act** of ours **therefore has the same net effect** on the total amount of good and bad in a canonically infinite world: **none whatsoever.** Aggregative **consequentialist theories are threatened by infinitarian paralysis**: they seem to imply that if the world is canonically infinite then it is always ethically indifferent what we do. In particular, they would imply that it is ethically indifferent whether we cause another holocaust or prevent one from occurring. If any non‐contradictory normative implication is a reductio ad absurdum, this one is.

1. There is no bright line to where consequences end, as util leaves them open until the end of the world. Ends trigger more ends, so the impacts of our actions never definitively stop, thus we aren’t able to assess the collective impacts to determine the moral worth of an action.
2. There is no intrinsically valuable state of affairs, so utility halts action because states can never know what its citizens “interests” really are. Citizens have different pleasures based on their own experiences and unique psychological makeup. Even if populations can agree on values, they could never reach consensus on the relative worth of policy values, and if they could there would be no way of determining this in a timely manner. This would also require constant reconfirmation, else the system would fail when people’s values changed.
3. Inductive reasoning fails, so we can’t value actions by ends. This means you reject frameworks and distinctions contingent on future consequences or states of affairs.

#### Hume[[3]](#footnote-3)

All reasonings may be divided into two kinds, namely, demonstrative reasoning, or that concerning relations of ideas, and moral reasoning, or that concerning matter of fact and existence. That there are no demonstrative arguments in the case seems evident; since it implies no contradiction that the course of nature may change, and that an object, seemingly like those which [what] we have experienced, may be attended with different or contrary effects. **May I not clearly and distinctly conceive** that a body, falling from the clouds, and which, in all other respects, resembles snow, has yet the taste of salt or feeling of fire? Is there any more intelligible proposition than to affirm, **that** all the **trees will flourish in December** and January, **and decay in** May and **June**? Now whatever is intelligible, and can be distinctly conceived, implies no contradiction, and can never be proved false by any demonstrative argument or abstract reasoning a priori. If we be, therefore, engaged by arguments to put trust in past experience, and make it the standard of our future judgment, these arguments must be probable only, or such as regard matter of fact and real existence according to the division above mentioned. But that there is no argument of this kind, must appear, if our explication of that species of reasoning be admitted as solid and satisfactory. We have said that **all arguments** concerning existence **are founded on the relation of cause and effect**; that **our knowledge of that relation is derived entirely from experience; and** that **all our experimental conclusions proceed upon the supposition that the future will be conformable to the past.** To endeavour, therefore, **the proof of this last supposition** by probable arguments, or arguments regarding existence, **must be evidently going in a circle**, and taking that for granted, which is the very point in question.

1. Consequentialism fails to distinguish between acts and omissions—it holds agents accountable even for harms we allow. This makes our obligations infinite since we can always do more to prevent harm, precluding our ability to act morally and thus defeating the purpose of morality as a guide to action.
2. Under utility, the value of personal projects and integrity is destroyed.

#### Williams[[4]](#footnote-4)

It is absurd to demand of such a man, when the sums come in from the utility network which the projects of others have in part determined, that [one] should just step aside from his own project and decision and acknowledge the decision which utilitarian calculation requires. It is to alienate him in a real sense from his actions and the source of his action in his own convictions. It is to make him into a channel between the input of everyone's projects, including his own, and an output of optimific decision; but this is to neglect the extent to which his projects and his decisions have to be seen as the actions and decisions which flow from the projects and attitudes with which he is most closely identified. It is thus, in the most literal sense, an attack on his integrity.

1. Util leads to repugnant conclusions.

#### Ryder[[5]](#footnote-5)

Utilitarianism will justify torture if the sum total of benefits caused to several others is considered to be greater than the pain inflicted. The gang rape of a woman, for instance, can be justified if the aggregated pleasures of all the rapists exceeds her suffering. This must be wrong. Around each individual is the boundary of its own consciousness and so such aggregations of pains and pleasures across individuals make no sense. Consciousness does not cross the boundary between one individual and another, so neither can meaningful calculations of pain.

1. Impersonal aggregation of pain and pleasure across individuals make no sense.

#### Taurek[[6]](#footnote-6)

Now, adding still others to our number, not one of whom will suffer as much as you are asked to bear, will not change things for me. It ought not to change things for any of us. If not one of us can give you a good reason why you should be willing to undergo a greater suffering so that he might be spared a lesser one, then there is simply no good reason why you should be asked to suffer so that the group may be spared. Suffering is not additive in this way. The discomfort of each of a large number of individuals experiencing a minor headache does not add up to anyone's experiencing a migraine. In such a trade-off situation as this we are to compare your pain or your loss, not to our collective or total pain, whatever exactly that is supposed to be, but to what will be suffered or lost by any given single one of us.

1. Desirability and morality are circular. We define morality and what moral obligations are based off what is desirable, yet we define what is desirable off of what is moral.
2. Morality leads to nihilism. As a utilitarian, we calculate the benefits of existence by balancing benefits against harms, but human lives contain much more bad than is ordinarily recognized. It would be better not to live than to live at all.

# AT Util Warrants

## Generic

**AT Harris**

1. You can’t generate knowledge from experience unless you reflect upon your ends in order to derive moral truths. For example experience alone could never tell me integration in calculus is legitimate in every particular instance. It takes reason to generate the universal conclusions that math proves true.
2. Is-ought fallacy
3. Begs the question of why those feelings of pleasure are good and those of pain are bad, besides that we feel that way, which is circular.

**AT Rachels**

Just because it’s a conscious omission of action doesn’t mean you’re responsible for it—the omissions themselves are not intentional violations of a person’s dignity.

**AT Goodin**

1. The warrant says that government is always uncertain—this is actually a reason not to prefer util because it can never succeed as an action-guiding framework whereas the premises of my framework are based in certainty.
2. There’s no warrant why government actors are distinct from individual private actors—the card just asserts this.

**AT Woller**

Interests trade off all the time, but rights don’t—perfect duties don’t conflict. There’s a difference between something being suboptimal and something being wrong. For example, a hotel may want to close when a restaurant dependent on it wants to stay open, but the restaurant isn’t wronged when it’s forced to close.

**AT Sinnott-Armstrong**

1. The entirety of logic presupposes consequentialism since he assumes that what is intrinsically good or bad, i.e. what we take actions to enable, are states of affairs rather than actions themselves. For example, I could have a reason to not lie *not* because it enables some better state of affairs, but because lying is an intrinsically bad action.
2. I have a reason to take an action insofar as I *think* that it will enable me to pursue good, even if it doesn’t actually enable good.
3. This is the is-ought fallacy—even if people descriptively adopt reasons to enable good or prevent bad, that doesn’t mean we *should* base our ethical theories on that. The argument uses descriptive facts to justify normative reasons.

AT Grass-mowing warrant

You would have a reason to mow the grass because the *intention* of the action is to allow you to fulfill your promise, not because it *enables* you to. No one takes actions because they work, but rather because they *think* it works. And just because I recognize that events are causal doesn’t mean that only the consequences matter.

**AT Psychological preference**

1. This is the definition of the is-ought fallacy—just because people psychologically prefer util doesn’t mean they *should* prefer util, nor that that is morally relevant.
2. Empirically denied—I don’t.
3. No warrant why the true ethical theory is the one preferred by the most people.

## AT Reductionism

1. Reductionism is entirely anis-ought fallacy—just because most people make poor decisions (and don’t know how to consider long-term consequences) doesn’t mean we shouldbase our ethical theories on those tendencies. The argument uses metaphysical facts to justify normative reasons without metaphysical facts.
2. Whenever you make any decision in the present, the reasons are derived from an identification with your future, thus disproving any notion of reductionist identity.

#### Korsgaard[[7]](#footnote-7)

You may think of it this way: suppose that a succession of rational agents do occupy my body. I, the one who exists now, need the cooperation of the others, and they need mine, if together we are going to have any kind of a life. The unity of our life is forced upon us, although not deeply, by our shared embodiment, together with our desire to carry on long-term plans and relationships. But actually this is somewhat misleading. To ask why the present self should cooperate with the future ones is to assume that the present self has reasons with which it already identifies, and which are independent of those of later selves. Perhaps it is natural to think of the present self as necessarily concerned with present satisfaction. But it is mistaken. Your present self must, in order to make deliberative choices, identify with something from which you will derive your reasons, but not necessarily with something present. The sort of thing you identify yourself with may carry you automatically into the future: and I have been suggesting that this will very likely be the case. Indeed, the choice of any action, no matter how trivial, takes you some way into the future. And to the extent that you regulate your choices by identifying yourself as the one who is implementing something like a particular plan of life, you need to identify with your future in order to be what you are even now. 25 When the person is viewed as an agent, no clear content can be given to the idea of a merely present self. 26

1. The logic of reductionism presupposes that life is already a series of experiences.

#### Korsgaard[[8]](#footnote-8)

So Parfit thinks that Reductionism supports the thesis that the quality of experiences is what matters, and so supports a Utilitarian theory of value. But I believe instead that Parfit has assumed this theory of value from the start. The metaphysical argument about whether a person is a separately existing subject of experiences, or merely a stream of experiences with no separately existing subject, is preceded by an essentially moral assumption: the assumption that life is a series of experiences, and so that a person is first and foremost a locus of experiences. If you begin with the view that a person is a subject of experiences, and take away the subject, you are indeed left with nothing but experiences. But you will only begin with that view if you assume from the start that having experiences is what life is all about.

**AT Split brains**

1. This isn’t even a real study, just something Parfit postulated.
2. That you only have a single body that cannot carry out contradictory movements serves to disprove Parfit’s split brain argument.

#### Korsgaard[[9]](#footnote-9)

Your conception of yourself as a unified agent is not based on a metaphysical theory, nor on a unity of which you are conscious. Its grounds are practical, and it has two elements. First, there is the raw necessity of eliminating conflict among your various motives. In making his argument for Reductionism, Parfit appeals to a real-life example which has fascinated contemporary philosophers: persons with split brains.(245-246) When the corpus callosum, the network of nerves between the two hemispheres of the brain, is cut, the two hemispheres can function separately. 19 In certain experimental situations, they do not work together and appear to be wholly unconscious of each other's activities. These cases suggest that the two hemispheres of the brain are not related in any metaphysically deeper way than, say, two people who are married. They share the same quarters and, with luck, they communicate. Even their characteristic division of labor turns out to be largely conventional, and both can perform most functions. So imagine that the right and left halves of your brain disagree about what to do. Suppose that they do not try to resolve their differences, but each merely sends motor orders, by way of the nervous system, to your limbs. Since the orders are contradictory, the two halves of your body try to do different things. 20 Unless they can come to an agreement, both hemispheres of your brain are ineffectual. Like parties in Rawls's original position, they must come to a unanimous decision somehow. You are a unified person at any given time because you must act, and you have only one body with which to act.

AT Brain study

1. Mere correlation—the same part of my mind might be activated by both food and cute puppies, it doesn’t mean they’re the same thing.
2. The brain study’s flawed, there’s no way to control for the infinite other things that could’ve simultaneously activated that same part of the brain.

## AT Reflective Equilibrium

1. Intuitions are systematically misguiding and cannot ground moral theory construction.

Daniels[[10]](#footnote-10)

An alternative utilitarian response to the claim that utilitarianism conflicts with certain ordinary moral judgments is to dismiss these judgments [are] as pre-theoretical “intuitions” that probably result from cultural indoctrination and thus reflect superstition, bias, and mere historical accident. On this view, moral intuitions or judgments should have no evidentiary credentials and should play no role in moral theory construction or justification. Indeed, as the prominent utilitarians Richard Brandt (Brandt 1979) and Richard Hare (Hare 1973) argued against Rawls, simply making “coherent” a set of beliefs that have no “initial credibility” cannot produce justification, since coherent fictions are still only fictions. Indeed, when Rawls describes the conditions under which we might solicit considered moral judgments, namely that people be calm and have adequate information about the cases, they do not by themselves do anything to assuage the utilitarian worries. Brandt (Brandt 1990) reaffirms his early criticism when he claims that considered judgments lack “evidential force” regarding a moral order and therefore coherence in reflective equilibrium has only a kind of persuasiveness that comes from coherence among many elements being more convincing than the conviction that comes from any of its parts.

1. It’s circular—reflective equilibrium presupposes you know the right answer, but then you derive “true ethical theories” from what is already considered true.

## AT Bostrom

AT Moral uncertainty defaults util

1. In the context of a debate round the burden of debaters is just to prove our framework comparatively better, not that our framework is the absolutely correct framework.
2. Definitionally the fallacy of origin—just because life is a prerequisite for anything doesn’t mean that it comes first.
3. Circular justification—pursuing objective truth as a consequence presupposes a consequentialism framework, but the same argument is being used to justify consequentialism.
4. Circular justification again—the warrant in Bostrom says that if there’s a chance of discovering the moral truth then we default to preserving existence, but that presupposes a magnitude outweighs probability framework of analysis.
5. Causes policy paralysis because everything has a “risk” of extinction—we can’t do anything because all alternatives have a link to extinction.
6. We can’t aggregate knowledge. Putting people together doesn’t mean more knowledge, so having more lives and time won’t achieve ethical consensus.
7. We can only base probabilities on guaranteed outcomes, like when I flip a coin I know that the two possible outcomes are heads and tails, but we can’t generate probabilities in terms of framework debates, because we don’t know the possible set of outcomes we’re relating it to.
8. If we’re always trying to minimize extinction then we can’t even deliberate moral theories, because it itself has at least a minimal risk of extinction.
9. This assumes that we can’t deliberate about moral theories after death—if there’s an afterlife, we can still deliberate about morals in the afterlife.
10. Conflates the judge’s role as pre-fiat and post-fiat, because the judge is not actually causing any actions in the real world—the judge saying that one debater has won the framework debate doesn’t mean that the framework is actually true. The judge doesn’t actually have to vote on whether we should preserve value in the real world.

## AT Naturalism

1. Naturalism is epistemically flawed. Warrants for moral theories must come prior to existence.

#### Stelzig[[11]](#footnote-11)

Take first the epistemological problem. Every view of morality must ultimately give some account of how it is that we come to know what is right. An otherwise impressive moral metaphysics is pointless if epistemologically implausible. 103 With general norms, it is plausible that we may come to learn them gradually, refining our understanding through practice. Naturalistically learning through practice, however, is foreclosed to one who sees deontology as both pervasive and particularist. Almost every situation is morally different from the rest, even if only slightly so. If deontology is exhaustive of morality, there must be a separate injunction for each situation. The epistemological [\*922] problem is that learning an essentially infinite number of separate rules to govern our conduct is implausible. It initially might be thought that the epistemological problem could be overcome by allowing generality within the specific norms, thus making it possible for the student of morality to learn these general principles and then derive the specific deontological prohibitions from them. The trouble with this response is that the important theoretic work is performed by the underlying principles by which the specific deontological maxims can be learned. This is problematic because theoretic entities are abstract. As such, Ockham’s Razor 104 and the principles of pragmatism 105 dictate that we do better to recognize conceptually the general principles. There is no logical inconsistency in positing a deontological norm for every morally distinct situation. But if pervasive, deontological maxims would be superfluous. Thus, it is theoretically preferable to deny them this exclusivity. 106 Suppose the epistemological problem can be skirted by allowing that some theoretically benign generality informs our moral understanding. If deontology may be exhaustive without being particularist, then a separate objection, the conflicts problem, arises. As was true of the epistemological problem, the conflicts problem arises because morality has something to say about almost everything. Because the world is complex, if rights are general, then the evaluation of most morally interesting situations will either depend on more than one rights claim or on some other moral element, each problematic for the claim that deontology is exhaustive of morality. The reason is structural. Our moral intuitions are highly nuanced – often minor changes to a factual situation alter the normative evaluation of that situation. But since a limited number of general norms, because they are general, cannot account for this contextual sensitiv ity, some other explanation must be offered. Positing a greater number of more specific deontological norms could account for this factual sensitivity. Doing so, however, threatens to reincarnate the epistemological problem. If our norms are relatively few in number, thereby putting them within our epistemic reach, either many norms will apply to each situation to give us the contextual sensitivity that is evident, or some other principles must be at work.

1. Is-ought fallacy—naturalism says we derive what we ought to do from what is already happening.
2. Begs the question—naturalism can only prove itself true without the use of non-natural logic.
3. Non-verifiable—people have different sensory experiences which makes the natural world different for different people. It’s impossible to come up with a stable ethical theory from that.
4. Open question argument—even if we determine that some natural object is good, that still leaves the open question of whether our desiring of that thing is good. Desiring of natural objects leads to infinite regress.

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